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ABSTRACT

This report provides a summary of the results of a survey intended to gather firsthand information concerning truancy and absenteeism in Illinois schools. The report includes data on attendance patterns and policies in various Illinois school districts, legal actions taken by the districts in response to truant behavior, ratings of assistance received from the judicial process and legislative or administrative changes suggested by respondents. The Appendix includes the survey instrument used to gather these data. (Author/DOW)

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TRUANCY AND STUDENT ATTENDANCE IN ILLINOIS SCHOOLS, 1976-77: A SURVEY REPORT

The Joint Committee on Truancy and Student Discipline
of the
The Illinois School Problems Commission

Technical Assistance and Report

by

Research and Statistics Section
Illinois Office of Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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TRUANCY AND STUDENT ATTENDANCE IN ILLINOIS SCHOOLS, 1976-77: A SURVEY REPORT

As part of its effort to propose legislative and administrative change which could assist schools with attendance/truancy problems, the Illinois School Problems Commission (SPC) in 1976 designated a subcommittee, the Illinois Joint Committee on Truancy and Student Discipline, to study the problems related to attendance and truancy in Illinois schools. The Joint Committee chaired by Norella Welch and composed of SPC members, school personnel, laymen, and representatives of the Student Affairs Section of the Illinois Office of Education has, over the past several months, conducted hearings around the state, explored the relevant literature concerning truancy and absenteeism, and worked to develop its own base of information concerning local district attendance policies, procedures, and practices. One facet of this activity was the development by the Joint Committee of a plan to survey the school districts in the state to obtain first-hand information deemed useful to better understand the problem area.

With technical assistance from the Research and Statistics Section of the Illinois Office of Education, a survey questionnaire (see Appendix A) was designed and a data collection conducted during February, 1977. A preliminary report of the initial returns of the survey was prepared in early March. Since that time, follow-up activities increased the returns of the survey by almost 38 percent. This report thus provides a summary of the returns as final data collection activities were completed during March. The following sections of

this report contain the findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on the statistical and narrative data contained herein.

FINDINGS

In this report of the survey findings, only the returns from the public school districts were analyzed. Of the 1024 survey forms sent to Illinois public school districts, 588 were received in the first returns (through February 28), and an additional 224 were received during the follow-up stage of the data collection, for a total return of 812, or 79.3 percent. Eight hundred six returns (99.3 percent) were usable for data analysis. Since only about 25 percent of the nonpublic school districts had returned the survey form by the February 25 first return deadline, the nonpublic districts' returns were excluded from the preliminary analysis, and no follow-up activities were directed to these districts. Thus, a summary of the findings from the nonpublic districts is not included in this report. Table 1 below presents a summary of the number and percents of the survey returns by district type.

TABLE 1. NUMBER AND PERCENT OF FIRST RETURNS BY SCHOOL DISTRICT TYPE

District Type	Population	Number and (Percent) of Returns	Returns as Percent of Population
Elementary	448	337 (41.8)	75.2
High School	128	114 (14.1)	89.1
Unit	448	355 (44.0)	79.2
All	1,024	806 (100.0)	78.7

Almost 90 percent of the public high school districts and nearly 80 percent of the unit districts are represented in the survey returns (high school

and unit districts both include the grades 9-12). Over three-fourths of the elementary districts (grades K-8) are represented in the survey returns as well. Responses from one or more districts were received from 99 of the 102 counties in Illinois (97.1%). Responses from districts in the following three counties were not included in this analysis of the survey returns: Bond, Edwards, and Pulaski. It should be noted, however, that two of these counties have only two school districts each, and the other one has only one school district. Table 2 below illustrates the distribution of survey responses by geographic region within the state (see Appendix B for a map of the geographic regions).

TABLE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF RETURNS BY GEOGRAPHIC REGION WITHIN ILLINOIS

Region	Number	Percent
1 - Northeast	278	34.5
2 - Northwest	129	16.0
3 - West Central	102	12.7
4 - East Central	122	15.1
5 - Southwest	79	9.8
6 - Southeast	96	11.9

As can be seen from Table 2, more than 34 percent of the respondent districts are located in the Northeast region comprised of the counties of Cook, Du Page, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will. Since the Northeast region contains just over 32 percent of the operating public school districts, the proportion of responses from that region is comparable to that which would be expected if the rate of response from all regions was uniform.

Among the counties representing the highest proportions of the total survey returns were: Cook (107; 13.3%), Lake (47; 5.8%), Du Page (42; 5.2%), LaSalle (28; 3.5%), Will (28; 3.5%), and St. Clair (20; 2.5%). These six counties account for almost 34 percent of the survey returns. Ninety-four percent of the districts responding had ten or less schools, with 33.6 percent having only one school, and 19.2 percent having only two schools.

Analysis of the survey returns by community type shows that the majority of the respondent districts were rural (56.2%), and also that most had enrollments of less than 1000 (56.1%). Tables 3 and 4 summarize the distribution of returns by community type (see Appendix C for a description of the community typology utilized) and school district enrollment. Crosstabulation of enrollment category by community type indicates that more than 47 percent of the respondent districts were both rural and under 1000 enrollment (see Appendix D).

TABLE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF RETURNS BY COMMUNITY TYPE

Community Type	Number	Percent
Rural	453	56.2
Suburb	245	30.4
Independent City	99	12.3
Central City	9	1.1

TABLE 4. DISTRIBUTION OF RETURNS BY SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT

	1-299	300-499	500-999	1000-1499	1500-2999	3000-5999	6000-11999	Over 11999
N	152	115	185	104	136	64	37	13
%	18.9	14.3	23.0	12.9	16.9	7.9	4.6	1.6

Attendance Policies

Almost three-fourths of the districts (74.7%) reported having written attendance policies. Of these districts, more than 95 percent indicated that their written policies were distributed. The percent of district who reported having written attendance policies, however, varies from 93.9 percent for high school districts to 58.5 percent for elementary districts, with unit districts at 83.0 percent. From these statistics it would appear that among the three district types, elementary districts are least likely to have written attendance policies and high school districts are most likely to have such written policies. Table 5 below summarizes the distribution of responses relative to written attendance policies.

TABLE 5. PERCENT OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAVING AND/OR DISTRIBUTING WRITTEN ATTENDANCE POLICIES BY DISTRICT TYPE

District Type	Number and (Percent) Having Written Policy		Percent Distributing Policy % To: Teachers	Parents	Students	Community
Elementary	197	(58.5)	91.4	89.8	77.7	71.9	18.8
High School	107	(93.9)	97.2	96.3	85.0	97.2	14.0
Unit	298	(83.0)	97.0	94.6	75.2	95.0	24.5
All	602	(74.7)	95.2	93.4	77.7	87.5	20.8

As can be seen from Table 5, written attendance policies were reported as distributed to teachers in more than 93 percent of the districts, to students in about 88 percent of the districts, to parents in about 78 percent of the districts, and to the community in just more than 20 percent of the districts. Further, it can be noted that attendance policies were reported as distributed to teachers, students, and parents by a greater proportion of high school districts than the other two district types. A greater proportion of unit districts (24.5%) than the other two district types indicated that policies were distributed to the community.

Of the 602 districts that report having written attendance policies, a majority (56.5%) also have written procedures for implementing the attendance policies. The proportion of these districts that have written procedures varies, with high school districts highest at 72.0 percent and elementary districts lowest at 45.7 percent. Over 98 percent of the districts that have written procedures for implementing the attendance policies also distribute them. Of those that distribute the written procedures 97.1 percent distribute to the teachers, 88.5 percent distribute to the students, 78.2 percent distribute to the parents, and 22.4 percent distribute to the community. Table 6 displays a summary of the distribution of responses relative to written procedures for implementing attendance policies.

TABLE 6. PERCENT OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAVING AND/OR DISTRIBUTING PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTING ATTENDANCE POLICIES BY DISTRICT TYPE

District Type	Number and (Percent) That Have Written Policy, That Also Have Written Procedures		Percent Distributing Written Procedures % To: Teachers	Parents	Students	Community
Elementary	90	(45.7)	93.3	88.9	72.2	63.3	20.0
High School	77	(72.0)	100.0	100.0	83.1	96.1	15.6
Unit	173	(58.1)	100.0	100.0	79.2	98.3	26.6
All	340	(56.5)	98.2	97.1	78.2	88.5	22.4

The data concerning written attendance policies and procedures for implementing the attendance policies were also tabulated by community type and district enrollment category. These tabulations appear in Tables 7, 8, 9, and 10. About 85 percent or more of the independent city and central city districts reported having written attendance policies, while 75 percent or less of the suburban and rural districts reported written policies. Almost 95 percent of the districts, with the exception of the eight central city districts, indicated that the attendance policies are distributed. Table 9 suggests that larger districts are more likely to have written attendance policies. Only about 57 percent of the districts having less than 300 enrollment reported written attendance policies, but over 75 percent of the districts having 500-1499 enrollment and 85 percent of the districts having 1500 or more enrollment reported written policies. Except for the districts with enrollment less than 300, about 95 percent or more of the districts indicated that the written policies are distributed.

The districts by community type that have written attendance policies and that also reported written procedures for implementing the policies were in descending order: central city (87.5%), suburban (68.9%), independent city (58.3%), and rural (48.3%). More than 99 percent of the rural, suburban, and independent city districts reported that the written procedures are distributed--most frequently to teachers and students, and somewhat less frequently to parents. Table 10 indicates a general pattern which implies that a greater proportion of the larger districts have written procedures for implementing attendance policies. At the extremes, 80.4 percent of the districts of 3000 enrollment or more have written procedures, while only 37.2 percent of the districts of under 300 enrollment have written procedures. For districts between 300 and 1500 enrollment, the proportion varies from 45.6 to 53.2 percent. One-third (66.7%) of the districts having enrollments of 1500 to

TABLE 7. SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAVING AND/OR DISTRIBUTING WRITTEN ATTENDANCE POLICIES BY COMMUNITY TYPE

Community Type	Number and (Percent) Having Written Policy		Percent Distributing Written Policy % , To:	Teachers	Parents	Students	Community
Rural	327	(72.2)	94.8	89.3	77.1	89.9	19.0
Suburb	183	(74.7)	96.7	94.5	82.5	82.5	24.6
Indep. City	84	(84.8)	94.0	96.4	71.4	89.3	19.0
Central City	8	(88.9)	87.5	87.5	62.5	87.5	25.0

TABLE 8. SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAVING AND/OR DISTRIBUTING PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTING ATTENDANCE POLICIES BY COMMUNITY TYPE

Community Type	Number and (Percent) That Have Written Policy, That Also Have Written Procedures		Percent Distributing Written Procedures % , To:	Teachers	Parents	Students	Community
Rural	158	(48.3)	100.0	99.4	81.6	95.6	20.9
Suburb	126	(68.9)	99.2	96.0	75.4	78.6	25.4
Indep. City	49	(58.3)	100.0	100.0	75.5	91.8	18.4
Central City	7	(87.5)	85.7	85.7	71.4	85.7	28.6

TABLE 9. SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAVING AND/OR DISTRIBUTING WRITTEN ATTENDANCE POLICIES BY ENROLLMENT

Enrollment	Number and (Percent) Having Written Policy		Percent Distributing Written Policy % , To:	Teachers	Parents	Students	Community
1-299	86	(56.6)	90.7	86.0	73.3	82.6	14.0
300-499	84	(73.0)	95.2	92.9	79.8	85.7	15.5
500-999	139	(75.1)	94.2	93.5	77.0	91.4	23.0
1000-1499	79	(76.0)	97.5	98.7	74.7	89.9	22.8
1500-2999	117	(86.0)	96.6	92.3	84.6	89.7	23.1
Over 2999	97	(85.1)	96.9	96.9	75.3	83.5	23.7

TABLE 10. SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAVING AND/OR DISTRIBUTING PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTING ATTENDANCE POLICIES BY ENROLLMENT

Enrollment	Number and (Percent) That Have Written Policy, That Also Have Written Procedures		Percent Distributing Written Procedures % , To:	Teachers	Parents	Students	Community
1-299	32	(37.2)	90.6	87.5	84.4	81.3	15.6
300-499	42	(50.0)	100.0	100.0	83.3	95.2	14.3
500-999	74	(53.2)	100.0	100.0	82.4	98.6	28.4
1000-1499	36	(45.6)	100.0	100.0	80.6	100.0	27.8
1500-2999	78	(66.7)	100.0	96.2	76.9	87.2	20.5
Over 2999	78	(80.4)	98.7	97.4	69.2	74.4	23.1

2,999 report written implementation procedures. For districts of 300 enrollment or more, almost all distribute the written procedures--primarily to teachers and students.

Truancy Policies and Identification of Truants

One question asked of the respondents was, "Do one or more communities within the school district have a municipal policy or ordinance concerning truancy? Almost 62 percent of respondents answered "no." about 27 percent indicated they "did not know", 5.7 percent did not respond, and 6.1 percent answered "yes."

The respondents were asked to indicate "the minimum criteria used to identify a student as truant in the day-to-day operation of the district's schools." Also, if students were classified as "chronic truants," the respondents were asked to describe "the minimum criteria used in the day-to-day operation of the schools to make this determination." Seventy-nine percent of the respondents wrote answers concerning identification of truants; most were definitions of truancy. Some of the responses were more criteria-specific than others but, in general, the answers, in order of frequency cited, in the following list were typical.

1. Absence without the knowledge or consent of the parent.
2. Three consecutive days of unexcused absence.
3. Repeated unexcused absence.
4. Any unexplained absence.
5. Absence without the knowledge or consent of the parent or school.
6. Five to ten days unexcused absence in a nine week period.
7. Absence with parent's knowledge but without sufficient reason.
8. Twelve to fifteen days unexcused absence.

There was more variability in the responses regarding the classification of students as "chronic truants." Many respondents noted that they did not utilize this classification, i.e., they did not differentiate between truants and "chronic truants." However, respondents from more than 74 percent of the high school districts, 64 percent of the unit districts, and 48 percent of the elementary districts (a total of 59 percent of the 806 districts) provided answers relevant to classification of students as "chronic truants." Answers typically given, in order of their frequency, and which suggested the criteria employed were:

1. Repeated unexcused absence.
2. Three consecutive days of unexcused absence.
3. Ten days of unexcused absence in a nine week period.
4. Five consecutive days of absence.
5. One or more days per week of absence with no acceptable reason. This includes absences on certain days of the week such as Monday or Friday.
6. Repeated truancy after parent conferences.
7. Absence which affects a student's learning process.
8. Continued truant behavior after the school and home have exhausted all alternatives.
9. Determined on a individual basis, usually by the principal.
10. Percentage of non-attendance ranging from 25 to 70 percent.

Table 11 displays the number and percent of districts by type, community type, and enrollment category that described criteria for identifying and classifying students as truants or chronic truants.

TABLE 11. NUMBER AND PERCENT OF DISTRICTS BY TYPE, COMMUNITY TYPE, AND ENROLLMENT CATEGORY CITING CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING AND/OR CLASSIFYING STUDENTS AS TRUANTS OR CHRONIC TRUANTS

	CRITERIA FOR: TRUANTS		CHRONIC TRUANTS	
	N	%	N	%
District Type				
Elementary	237	70.3	162	48.1
High School	104	91.2	85	74.6
Unit	294	82.8	229	64.5
Community Type				
Rural	349	77.0	261	57.6
Suburb	194	79.2	135	55.1
Independent City	85	85.9	74	74.7
Central City	7	77.8	6	66.7
Enrollment				
1 - 299	101	66.4	75	49.3
300 - 499	84	73.0	69	60.0
500 - 999	158	85.4	105	56.8
1000 - 1499	81	77.9	65	62.5
1500 - 2999	115	84.6	84	61.8
Over 2999	96	79.4	78	68.4
All	635	79.4	476	59.1

Estimates of the Number of Truants

The respondents were asked to use the criteria described in their responses to the questionnaire items concerning identification and/or classification of truants and "chronic truants" to provide a "best estimate of the number of students in the school district classified as 'truants' and 'chronic truants' during the a) current year to date, b) 1975-76 school year, and c) 1974-75 school year." The directions to the respondents specified that the estimated number of truants should include all students so identified, including those classified as "chronic truants," if any (i.e., the count of "chronic truants" was to be duplicated in the count of truants).

An analysis of the data by district type, community type, and region is summarized in Tables 12, 13, 14, and 15.

TABLE 12. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF TRUANTS FOR THE 1976-77 SCHOOL YEAR TO DATE, FOR 1975-76, AND FOR 1974-75, BY DISTRICT TYPE, COMMUNITY TYPE, AND REGION.

District Type	N	1976-77 To Date	1975-76	1974-75
Elementary	337	2,297	2,557	1,919
High School	114	12,119	10,472	9,891
Unit	355	8,510*	32,071	9,645*
Community Type				
Rural	453	3,177	3,538	3,088
Suburb	245	13,671	12,648	12,240
Indep. City	99	4,158	4,863	3,845
Central City	9	1,920*	24,051	2,282*
Region				
1-Northeast	278	12,405*	32,597	10,229*
2-Northwest	129	2,555	2,858	2,778
3-West Central	102	1,455	1,936	2,039
4-East Central	122	2,341	2,617	2,254
5-Southwest	79	2,326	3,168	2,969
6-Southeast	96	1,844	1,924	1,186
All	806	22,926	45,100	21,455

*Does not include City of Chicago School District 299.

It can be observed from Tables 12 and 13 that the total estimated number of truants and chronic truants reported is greater for 1975-76 than for either 1974-75 or 1976-77 to date. This is primarily due to the exclusion of data from the City of Chicago school district, as data from Chicago were obtained only for the most recently completed full school year, 1975-76, and not for 1974-75 and the current year to date. Since more complete data were provided for the 1975-76 school year, the analysis presented here concentrates on 1975-76 school year estimates.

The data in Table 12 can be used to calculate an average estimated number of truants for each district by district type, community type, and region. If this is done for the 1975-76 school year, the statistics show the following average estimated number of truants per district: elementary districts, 7.6; high school districts, 91.9; unit districts, 90.3 (29.3 if Chicago is excluded); rural districts, 7.8; suburban districts, 51.6; independent city districts, 49.1; and central city districts, 2672.3 (293.9 if Chicago is excluded). By region the estimated average number of truants per district is as follows: Northeast, 117.3 (39.3 if Chicago is excluded); Northwest, 22.2; West Central, 19.0; East Central, 21.5; Southwest, 40.1; and Southeast, 20.0.

Similarly, the data in Table 13 for the school year 1975-76 can be used to provide the following average estimated number of chronic truants per district: elementary districts, 1.8; high school districts, 18.7; unit districts, 36.1 (9.99 if Chicago is excluded); rural districts, 3.3; suburban districts, 12.1; independent city districts, 13.0; and central city districts, 1093.0 (69.4 if Chicago is exluded). A comparison of the total estimated number of truants and chronic truants indicates that about one-third of the estimated number of truants were classified as chronic truants by the survey respondents.

TABLE 13. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF CHRONIC TRUANTS FOR THE 1976-77 SCHOOL YEAR TO DATE, FOR 1975-76, AND FOR 1974-75 BY DISTRICT TYPE, COMMUNITY TYPE, AND REGION

District Type	N	1976-77 To Date	1975-76	1974-75
Elementary	337	562	612	611
High School	114	1,649	2,130	1,473
Unit	355	2,994*	12,820	3,384*
Community Type				
Rural	453	1,290	1,480	1.126
Suburb	245	2,095	2,955	2,462
Indep. City	99	1,292	1,290	1,176
Central City	9	528*	9,837	704*
Region				
1-Northeast	278	1,968*	11,918	2,060*
2-Northwest	129	612	669	716
3-West Central	102	583	670	693
4-East Central	122	921	954	756
5-Southwest	79	697	897	823
6-Southeast	96	424	454	420
All	806	5,205	15,562	5,468

Using fall enrollments as a base, the percent of the estimated number of truants and chronic truants per district for 1975-76 was calculated for each of the 806 respondent school districts. Among the three district types, high school districts had both the highest mean and median estimated proportion of enrollment (3.77% and 1.56% respectively) classified as truant. Additionally, one-fourth of the high school districts had 5.11 percent or more of their enrollments classified as truants. For unit districts the mean and median estimated proportions of enrollment classified as truant were 1.40 percent and 0.66 percent, respectively, with one-fourth of these districts having 1.71 percent or more of their enrollments classified as truants. The mean estimated proportion of enrollment classified as truants in elementary districts was less than one-half of one percent (0.46%), and the

*Does not include City of Chicago School District 299.

median was 0.08 percent, with three-fourths of the elementary districts classifying 0.49 percent or less of their enrollments as truant. As can be seen from Table 14, the distribution of the percent of estimated number of truants is skewed, with about one-fourth of the districts of each type having considerably higher estimated proportions of truants than the other three-fourths. A similar skewness exists in

TABLE 14. DISTRIBUTION OF PERCENT OF ESTIMATED NUMBER OF TRUANTS BY DISTRICT TYPE FOR THE 1975-76 SCHOOL YEAR

District Type	Mean	Median	75th Percentile	Lowest	Highest	N
Elementary	0.46	0.08	0.49	0	10.14	337
High School	3.77	1.56	5.11	0	36.91	114
Unit	1.40	0.66	1.71	0	18.58	355

TABLE 15. DISTRIBUTION OF PERCENT OF ESTIMATED NUMBER OF CHRONIC TRUANTS BY DISTRICT TYPE FOR THE 1975-76 SCHOOL YEAR

District Type	Mean	Median	75th Percentile	Lowest	Highest	N
Elementary	0.18	0.00	0.13	0	4.90	337
High School	0.91	0.31	1.28	0	12.18	114
Unit	0.59	0.27	0.73	0	9.50	335

the data summarized in Table 15 for the percent of the estimated number of chronic truants by district type. For example, the data indicate that for high school districts one-fourth classify 1.28 percent or more of their enrollments as chronic truants, while one-half classify 0.31 percent or less of their enrollments as chronic truants. The data show that high school districts and unit districts both have higher estimated proportions of their enrollments classified as truants and/or chronic truants than do elementary districts.

It should be noted, however, when interpreting Tables 12, 13, 14, and 15, that the estimates of numbers of truants and chronic truants were those supplied by the respondent districts using their own local criteria for identifying and/or

classifying students into these categories. These criteria did exhibit some variability as noted earlier in this report.

To summarize, the estimates of truancy, while undoubtedly influenced by varying local criteria, tend to suggest the following:

1. The average estimated number of truants and chronic truants per district is greater among high school and unit districts than in elementary districts.

2. The proportion of the district enrollment classified as truants and/or chronic truants is also greater among high school and unit districts than in elementary districts.

3. The average estimated number of truants and chronic truants per district is highest among suburban and urban districts and lowest in rural districts. This, however, is somewhat related to district size, as urban districts are more likely to have larger enrollments.

4. By geographic region the largest estimated number of truants are reported in the northeast region of the state consisting of Cook County and the surrounding eight counties of Dupage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will.

Practices Utilized in Response to Truant Behavior

Respondents were asked to indicate which of several listed practices were commonly utilized in the school district in response to truant behavior by students. Table 16 summarizes the percent of respondents reporting each practice by district type.

TABLE 16. PERCENT OF DISTRICTS UTILIZING VARIOUS PRACTICES IN RESPONSE TO TRUANT BEHAVIOR, BY DISTRICT TYPE.

	Practice	Elementary	High School	Unit	All
1.	Parent or guardian of suspected truant contacted by telephone.	92.0	98.2	96.3	94.8
2.	Parent conferences conducted.	80.7	93.9	89.0	86.2
3.	Truants receive in-school counseling.	56.4	88.6	81.4	72.0
4.	Parent or guardian of suspected truant notified of student's absence by mail.	52.8	75.4	77.2	66.7
5.	Truant/attendance officer visits home of suspected truant.	46.9	44.7	57.7	51.4

TABLE 16 -- Continued

	Practice	Elementary	High School	Unit	All
6.	Truants referred to community service agencies other than law enforcement.	29.4	48.2	40.3	36.8
7.	Truants are suspended.	10.1	56.1	45.4	32.1
8.	Truants receive special education services.	11.9	31.6	20.8	18.6
9.	Truants receive special testing.	8.6	20.2	12.7	12.0
10.	Truants placed in work-study programs.	1.5	23.7	15.5	10.8
11.	Truants placed in district alternative learning programs.	2.7	26.3	11.8	10.0
12.	Truants placed in vocational schools or vocational programs.	0.3	12.3	11.3	6.8
13.	Truants are expelled.	0.0	14.0	9.9	6.3
14.	Truants given option to attend schools in other attendance areas within school district.	2.4	5.3	3.9	3.5
15.	Truants placed in residential schools.	1.8	7.0	3.4	3.2
16.	Other practice indicated.	8.3	20.2	9.6	10.5

Table 16 indicates that the four most frequently reported practices among all types of districts were, in rank order: (1) parent or guardian of a suspected truant is contacted by telephone, (2) parent conferences are conducted, (3) truants receive in-school counseling, and (4) parent or guardian of a suspected truant is notified of the student's absence by mail. The fifth most often reported practice among elementary and unit districts, was "truant office or attendance officer visits home or a suspected truant." This last practice was reported by only slightly more than 50 percent of the districts, while the four most often reported practices were indicated as utilized by 66 percent or more of the districts. From the practices indicated as commonly utilized it would appear that districts most frequently engage in activity which involves interaction with

the parent or guardian of a suspected truant. Interestingly, 56.1 percent of the high school districts reported that truants are suspended. This was the fifth most frequently reported practice among high school districts. Slightly more than 45 percent of the unit districts reported the practice of suspending truants. It should be noted, however, that almost one-fourth of the high school districts report utilizing placement of truants in work-study programs, while less than 16 percent of the unit districts report this same practice. A study of Table 16 reveals other apparent generalizations, but the statistics should be examined in relation to the school district type, since a practice which, for example, might be appropriate for a high school district (and thus possibly frequently cited) may not be appropriate for an elementary district (and thus be less frequently cited). The placement of truants in a work-study program is an example of this condition.

TABLE 17. PERCENT OF DISTRICTS UTILIZING VARIOUS PRACTICES IN RESPONSE TO TRUANT BEHAVIOR, BY COMMUNITY TYPE

	Practice	Rural	Suburb	Indep. City	Central City
1.	Parent or guardian of suspected truant contacted by telephone.	92.1	98.0	99.0	100.0
2.	Parent conferences conducted.	79.0	95.1	96.0	100.0
3.	Truants receive in-school counseling.	63.1	80.8	87.9	100.0
4.	Parent or guardian of suspected truant notified of student's absence by mail.	60.5	71.4	80.8	100.0
5.	Truant/attendance officer visits home of suspected truant.	49.0	50.2	61.6	88.9
6.	Truants referred to community service agencies other than law enforcement.	27.4	46.9	50.5	88.9
7.	Truants are suspended.	26.9	32.2	53.5	55.6
8.	Truants receive special education services.	13.7	28.6	13.1	55.6

TABLE 17 -- Continued

Practice	Rural	Suburb	Indep. City	Central City
9. Truants receive special testing.	7.9	19.6	10.1	33.3
10. Truants placed in work-study programs.	6.8	15.1	14.1	55.6
11. Truants placed in district alternative learning programs.	3.3	19.2	12.1	77.8
12. Truants placed in vocational schools or vocational programs.	6.4	5.7	9.1	33.3
13. Truants are expelled.	4.4	6.1	14.1	22.2
14. Truants given option to attend schools in other attendance areas within school district.	0.9	7.8	2.0	33.3
15. Truants placed in residential schools.	0.7	7.3	4.0	11.1
16. Other practice indicated.	8.2	14.3	12.1	11.1

Tables 17 and 18 summarize the percent of respondents reporting each practice by community type and district size. Again, it can be noted that the use of certain practices in response to truant behavior is to a degree dependent upon school district characteristics. A small, rural district, for example, may not be able to allow truants the option to attend schools in other attendance areas within the school district, since there may be only one attendance center and thus just one attendance area for the whole district. Conversely, a large district or an independent city or central city district may have more resources and options available to utilize in responding to truant behavior. An examination of Tables 17 and 18 reveals evidence which tends to support this generalization. For example, greater proportions of both larger districts and urban districts reported utilizing in-school counseling for truant behavior, as well as referring truants to community service agencies other than law enforcement agencies.

TABLE 18. PERCENT OF DISTRICTS UTILIZING VARIOUS PRACTICES IN RESPONSE TO TRUANT BEHAVIOR, BY ENROLLMENT

	Practice	1-299	300-499	500-999	1000-1499	1500-2999	Over 2999
1.	Parent or guardian of suspected truant contacted by telephone.	84.9	94.8	96.2	98.1	99.3	97.4
2.	Parent conferences conducted.	62.5	83.5	88.6	95.2	97.1	95.6
3.	Truants receive in-school counseling.	42.8	65.2	74.1	78.8	86.8	90.4
4.	Parent or guardian of suspected truant notified of student's absence by mail.	38.2	62.6	71.4	71.2	77.9	84.2
5.	Truant/attendance officer visits home of suspected truant.	40.8	47.8	53.0	58.7	49.3	62.3
6.	Truants referred to community service agencies other than law enforcement.	17.1	29.6	30.8	42.3	50.7	58.8
7.	Truants are suspended.	9.2	30.4	30.3	36.5	46.3	46.5
8.	Truants receive special education services.	5.9	15.7	14.1	16.3	23.5	42.1
9.	Truants receive special testing.	3.3	5.2	12.4	12.5	12.5	28.9
10.	Truants placed in work-study programs.	2.0	4.3	9.7	8.7	11.8	31.6
11.	Truants placed in district alternative learning programs.	1.3	1.7	6.5	6.7	12.5	36.0
12.	Truants placed in vocational schools or vocational programs.	1.3	6.1	8.6	4.8	5.9	14.9
13.	Truants are expelled.	0.7	3.5	4.9	8.7	13.2	8.8
14.	Truants given option to attend schools in other attendance areas within school district.	0.0	1.7	0.5	2.9	3.7	14.9
15.	Truants placed in residential schools.	0.0	0.0	1.1	2.9	5.9	11.4
16.	Other practice indicated.	5.9	10.4	9.2	12.5	14.0	13.2

Legal Actions in Response to Truant Behavior

The respondents were asked to indicate which of a list of four specific legal actions had been taken by district or school administrators in response to truant behavior by students. More than 36 percent of the respondents reported having requested the assistance of the state's attorney in forcing compliance of parents and students with school attendance laws, and a similar percent had requested police assistance in locating truants. Over 31 percent reported filing petitions against the parent or guardian, and 23 percent cited filing petitions in Juvenile Court. About 18 percent indicated that other legal actions have been taken, with 16.7 percent identifying specific actions. A crosstabulation of the responses by district type is presented in Table 19.

TABLE 19. PERCENT OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS REPORTING LEGAL ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO TRUANT BEHAVIOR, BY DISTRICT TYPE

Legal Action	Elementary	High School	Unit	All
State attorney's assistance requested	19.6	52.1	50.1	36.2
Police assistance requested in locating truants	31.2	46.5	37.5	36.1
Petitions filed against parent	24.9	45.6	33.2	31.5
Petitions filed in Juvenile Court	17.8	36.0	23.7	23.0
Other legal action taken	16.0	19.3	18.9	17.7

The statistics in Table 19 indicate that with the exception of the practice of requesting assistance of the state's attorney, high school districts report utilizing all of the identified legal actions in proportionately greater numbers than do elementary or unit districts. The exception is interesting, since about 50 percent of the unit districts, but only 42 percent of the high

school districts, report requesting the assistance of the state's attorney. This exception represents a reversal of a pattern evident for the other legal actions. This may be only an artifact of the data, or it may be found to be due to a local political situation if analyzed in more detail.

TABLE 20. PERCENT OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS REPORTING LEGAL ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO TRUANT BEHAVIOR, BY COMMUNITY TYPE

Legal Action	Elementary	High School	Unit	All
State attorney's assistance requested	30.9	30.6	70.7	77.8
Police assistance requested in locating truants	21.6	53.5	59.6	33.3
Petitions filed against parent	21.0	45.7	42.4	55.6
Petitions filed in Juvenile Court	12.4	39.6	26.3	66.7
Other legal action taken	15.0	20.0	24.2	22.2

Examination of the percent of school districts by community type reporting legal actions in response to truant behavior by students reveals that the proportion of independent city and central city districts reporting having requested the assistance of the state's attorney is more than double that of rural and suburban districts (i.e., 71 percent or more vs. 31 percent). Overall, the practices of requesting police assistance in locating truants, filing petitions against parents, and filing petitions in Juvenile Court are almost twice as likely to be utilized by suburban and urban districts than by rural districts (see Table 20). This finding probably reflects both the extent to which truancy is perceived as a problem in these districts as well as the availability of assistance in dealing with truant behavior locally

(i.e., truancy is usually a problem of greater magnitude in non-rural districts, and legal assistance may be more routinely available as well as sought).

TABLE 21. PERCENT OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS REPORTING LEGAL ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO TRUANT BEHAVIOR, BY ENROLLMENT

Legal Action	1-299	300-499	500-999	1000-1499	1500-2999	Over 2999
State attorney's assistance requested	14.5	27.8	38.4	46.2	47.1	48.2
Police assistance requested in locating truants	10.5	23.5	33.0	48.1	54.4	55.3
Petitions filed against parents	10.5	20.9	29.7	34.6	41.2	58.8
Petitions filed in Juvenile Court	5.9	13.9	13.5	26.9	34.6	52.6
Other legal action taken	8.6	16.5	14.1	22.1	20.6	29.8

The pattern for the proportion of school districts by enrollment size reporting legal actions in response to truant behavior is evident from Table 21. Larger districts utilize all legal actions identified in the survey questionnaire in greater proportions than do smaller districts. Again, the magnitude of the perceived truancy problem and the local availability and commitment to use legal action may be more prevalent among larger districts. There is also some interrelationship between community type and district enrollment which serves to partially explain the patterns observed in the data presented in Tables 20 and 21, i.e., districts of less than 500 enrollment are predominantly rural (92.9%), while districts of 1500 or more are predominantly suburban or urban (85.6%).

Rating of Assistance Received from the Judicial Process

The respondents were asked to indicate how school administrators and attendance officers would rate the assistance the school district is presently receiving from the judicial process in dealing with truancy. Twenty-five percent of the respondents did not answer this question; however, of those who did, more than 40 percent rated the assistance as "poor", while 22.6 percent rated the assistance as "fair." Only 20.3 percent rated the assistance as "good" or "excellent." Table 22 summarizes the distribution of responses for the rating by school district type.

TABLE 22. RATINGS OF THE ASSISTANCE RECEIVED FROM THE JUDICIAL PROCESS IN DEALING WITH TRUANCY, BY DISTRICT TYPE

Rating	Percent of Response and (Percent of Those Rating) Elementary	High School	Unit	All
Excellent	3.6 (5.9)	3.5 (3.9)	3.7 (4.3)	3.6 (4.8)
Good	12.5 (20.6)	11.4 (12.7)	11.0 (13.0)	11.7 (15.5)
Adequate	14.8 (24.5)	14.0 (15.7)	10.1 (12.0)	12.7 (16.8)
Fair	11.9 (19.6)	14.0 (15.7)	22.8 (27.0)	17.0 (22.6)
Poor	17.8 (29.4)	46.5 (52.0)	36.9 (43.7)	30.3 (40.3)
Did not rate	39.5 ----	10.5 ----	15.5 ----	24.8 ----

When the ratings are examined by district type, it is evident that respondents in high school and unit districts were most likely to rate the assistance received from the judicial process as "poor." Approximately 52 percent and 44 percent respectively of the respondents from these district types designated the "poor" rating. When one notes that these district types usually have the greatest incidence of truancy, these statistics seem especially telling. Also, the greater proportions of respondents from high school and unit districts

who did rate the judicial process (89.5 percent and 84.5 percent vs. 61.5 percent for elementary districts) suggests that the respondents from high school and unit districts may have had more occasions to use the judicial process in dealing with truancy than those respondents from elementary districts.

Analysis of the ratings of the assistance received from the judicial process by community type and district enrollment shows that 31.3 percent of the rural districts and 49.3 percent of the districts under 300 enrollment did not rate the judicial process. Urban districts and larger districts had consistently smaller proportions of respondents who did not rate the judicial process. One hundred percent of the central city districts (9) and 93 percent of the districts of 3000 enrollment or larger (106) rated the judicial process (see Tables 23 and 24). This finding suggests also that respondents from larger and more urban districts may have had more involvement with the judicial process in dealing with truancy than rural and smaller districts. The highest proportion of "excellent" and "good" ratings of the judicial process were found among the central city districts, as 33.3 percent (3) indicated these ratings; however, of the districts having 3000 or more enrollment, only 15.1 percent (16) rated the judicial process as "excellent" or "good."

In summary, elementary, rural, and smaller districts were least likely to rate the assistance received from the judicial process in responding to truant behavior of students. This tends to suggest that these districts utilize the judicial process to a lesser degree than do high school, unit, urban, and larger districts. The ratings of the judicial process by all categories of districts tend to indicate that those who find the process "excellent" or "good" are in the minority.

TABLE 23. RATINGS OF THE ASSISTANCE RECEIVED FROM THE JUDICIAL PROCESS IN DEALING WITH TRUANCY, BY COMMUNITY TYPE

Rating	Percent of Response and (Percent of Those Rating) Rural	Suburb	Indep. City	Central City
Excellent	3.1 (4.5)	3.7 (4.6)	4.0 (4.3)	22.2
Good	9.7 (14.1)	15.5 (19.6)	11.1 (12.0)	11.1
Adequate	12.4 (18.0)	14.3 (18.0)	10.1 (10.9)	11.1
Fair	15.2 (22.2)	17.1 (21.6)	25.3 (27.2)	11.1
Poor	28.3 (41.2)	28.6 (36.1)	42.4 (45.7)	44.4
Did not rate	31.3 ----	20.8 ----	7.1 ----	0.0

TABLE 24. RATINGS OF THE ASSISTANCE RECEIVED FROM THE JUDICIAL PROCESS IN DEALING WITH TRUANCY, BY DISTRICT ENROLLMENT

Rating	Percent of Response and (Percent of Those Rating) 1-299	300-499	500-999	1000-1499	1500-2999	Over 2999
Excellent	2.6 (5.2)	4.3 (6.0)	3.2 (4.4)	1.9 (2.4)	5.9 (6.7)	3.5 (3.8)
Good	9.9 (19.5)	12.2 (16.9)	13.0 (17.5)	9.6 (12.0)	14.0 (15.8)	10.5 (11.3)
Adequate	15.8 (31.2)	12.2 (16.9)	9.2 (12.4)	8.7 (10.8)	16.2 (18.3)	14.0 (15.1)
Fair	7.9 (15.6)	14.8 (20.5)	16.2 (21.9)	23.1 (28.9)	21.3 (24.2)	21.9 (23.6)
Poor	14.5 (28.6)	28.7 (39.8)	32.4 (43.8)	36.5 (45.8)	30.9 (35.0)	43.0 (46.2)
Did not rate	49.3 ----	27.8 ----	25.9 ----	20.2 ----	11.8 ----	7.0 ----

State Policy/Legislation Concerning School Attendance

Of five specific items listed, respondents were asked to indicate which should be included in state policy or legislation concerning school attendance. Over 61 percent of the respondents suggested the permissive policy of allowing schools to "make regulations requiring a parent or guardian of a student to notify the school by telephone any day the student will be absent." Almost 56 percent suggested the mandatory policy, "schools shall keep accurate records of all unexcused absences of one-half day or more." Approximately 38 percent preferred the mandatory procedure, "pupil absences must be reported by teachers each class period." Thirty-six percent preferred the mandatory procedure, "when a student is absent, the school must notify the student's parent or guardian by telephone if the absence has not been reported by the parent or guardian." And more than 32 percent of the respondents agreed with the mandatory provision that "schools shall keep available on a quarterly basis (every 9 weeks) a record of the number of students having unexcused absences of one-half day or more and the total number of days of unexcused absences in the quarter."

Table 25 shows that over 75 percent of the high school district respondents preferred a policy allowing the schools to require a parent or guardian of a student to notify the school by telephone any day the student will be absent. This policy is also preferred by 88.9 percent (8 out of 9) central city districts. Conversely, only 38.6 percent of the high school district respondents agreed that the schools should notify the parent or guardian by telephone of a student's absence in the event the absence had not been reported by the parent or guardian. However, almost 78 percent (7 out of 9) of the central city preferred this policy.

TABLE 25. PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS AGREEING WITH SPECIFIC POLICY OR LEGISLATION CONCERNING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, BY DISTRICT TYPE AND COMMUNITY TYPE

Policy/Legislation*	Elementary	High School	Unit	Rural	Suburb	Indep. City	Central City	All
Require parents to notify school by phone	56.1	75.4	62.5	61.6	60.4	62.6	88.9	61.7
School must keep accurate records of unexcused absence	52.8	64.0	55.8	51.9	62.4	55.6	66.7	55.7
Pupil absences must be reported each class period	23.4	61.4	43.4	34.9	37.6	48.5	55.6	37.6
School must notify parent by phone of absence	36.8	38.6	34.4	34.7	38.4	32.3	77.8	36.0
Schools must keep records of unexcused absence on a quarterly basis	27.3	37.7	35.8	34.2	31.8	25.3	44.4	32.5

*See item 10 in the questionnaire, Appendix A, for the complete wording of these statements.

TABLE 26. PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS AGREEING WITH SPECIFIC POLICY OR LEGISLATION CONCERNING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, BY DISTRICT ENROLLMENT

Policy/Legislation*	1-299	300-499	500-999	1000-1499	1500-2999	Over 2999
Require parents to notify school by phone	57.2	60.0	61.6	62.5	61.0	69.3
School must keep accurate records of unexcused absence	47.4	57.4	51.4	54.8	64.7	62.3
Pupil absences must be reported each class period	28.3	33.0	37.8	37.5	47.8	42.1
School must notify parent by phone of absence	38.8	30.4	33.0	32.7	36.8	44.7
Schools must keep records of unexcused absences on a quarterly basis	30.9	30.4	31.4	34.6	30.9	38.6

*See item 10 in the questionnaire, Appendix A, for the complete workding of these statements.

Legislative or Administrative Changes Suggested by Respondents

The final item on the questionnaire provided for additional narrative response and asked, "What, in your opinion, are legislative or administrative changes which might assist schools and school district personnel in reducing truant behavior by students?" Half of the 806 respondents wrote some response to this question. The rate of response by district type was: elementary, 36.2 percent; high school, 61.4 percent; and unit, 59.4 percent. By community type the rate of response was: rural districts, 44.8 percent; suburban districts, 53.0 percent; independent city districts, 64.6 percent; and central city districts, 66.7 percent. And by enrollment size category the rate of response was: 1-299, 30.3 percent; 300-499, 47.0 percent; 500-999, 56.8 percent; 1000-1499, 53.8 percent; 1500-2999, 55.1 percent; 3000 or more, 57.9 percent. A summary of the content of the responses follows and is presented generally in the order of frequency encountered.

1. Regular attendance of a child at school is a parental responsibility. Parents contribute to their child's truancy by providing non-valid excuses. Students and parents must be held accountable. Mandatory fines for parents whose children do not attend school were strongly suggested.

2. No more legislation is needed. Most respondents felt laws are currently adequate but are not being enforced. More rapid response and faster processing of truancy cases are suggested. Respondents expressed great frustration with the state's attorneys and judges' failure to apply the law. Many felt state's attorneys should be mandated to prosecute truancy cases. Some respondents indicated that they no longer attempt to utilize the enforcement procedure of the compulsory age law because there is little support from the legal authorities.

3. No more mandated programs or procedures are needed. It was felt that local districts are in the best position to know their own problems and that only guidelines should be provided to insure some consistency of procedures. Many respondents indicated that procedures outlined in question 10 (see the questionnaire in Appendix A) were being followed, but felt the procedures ought to be permissive, rather than mandated.

4. Revisions of the compulsory age law. Many respondents cited a need for review of the compulsory age law, suggesting:

   a) lowering the school attendance age to 14,
   b) making attendance compulsory through eighth grade,
   c) raising the school attendance to 18,
   d) allowing students the option to attend a two-year vocational or career-oriented high school, and
   e) examination of the enforcement procedure.

5. There is a need for a statewide definition of truancy.

6. Provisions should be made to fund alternative programs.

7. Provide more funds for: vocational education, truant officers and attendance officers, and counselors.

8. Set a minimum number of days, excluding bona-fine illness, as one criterion for promotion. Set basic attendance requirements (number of days of attendance) after which a student loses credit for a course.

9. Residential placement.

10. Define by law what consitutes excused absence.

11. Suggestion that a network of local services and community agencies probably would be more effective than any additional legislation.

12. Give legal authority to regional superintendents of education to hold hearings with truant students and their parents with clear-cut, reasonable penalties for those who fail to cooperate.

13. Early prevention.

CONCLUSIONS

The following are conclusions based on the data analyses and the narrative summaries contained in this report.

1. From the number of estimated truants reported, from the responses regarding practices utilized, and from responses concerning the usage of the judicial process in dealing with truancy, it is evident that these data verify the generally acknowledged view that truancy is typically a more frequently occurring problem in high schools. This conclusion agrees with the well-documented pattern of consistently higher absenteeism in Illinois high schools.

2. The data described above also support the contention that truancy represents a problem of greater magnitude in urban and large school districts in Illinois.

3. The data also show that when estimates of the number of truants statewide are examined, they indicate that the Northeast region of the state (Cook County and the surrounding eight counties) has a large proportion (72%) of the estimated number of truants in the state, as identified according to local school criteria. (This region has about 62 percent of the state's public school enrollment.)

4. High school districts and unit districts (which both include grades 9-12) are much more likely to have written attendance policies and procedures for implementing the attendance policies than are elementary districts.

5. Larger school districts (1500 or more enrollment) are more likely to have written attendance policies and procedures for implementing the attendance policies than are smaller districts (under 500 enrollment).

6. The responses provided to questions in this survey clearly indicate that there is variability in the identification of truants in the day-to-day operation of the schools. Some school districts appear to identify any instance of an unexcused absence by a student as truant behavior, while other school districts consider that as much as twelve to fifteen days of unexcused absence by a student would be indicative of truant behavior.

7. The practices reported as most frequently utilized by school personnel in response to truant behavior by a student were generally those involving interaction between the school personnel and the parent or guardian of the student. A majority of high school districts report utilizing the practice of suspending truants. This finding applies to independent city and central city districts as well.

8. Legal action in response to truant behavior is common, especially among high school districts and districts with larger enrollments. Over 42 percent of the high school districts report utilizing one or more legal actions.

9. Respondents representing high school and unit districts give very low ratings to the assistance received from the judicial process in dealing with truancy. Of those rating the process, over 67 percent of the high school districts and more than 70 percent of the unit districts rated the assistance received as "fair" or "poor", and more than 59 percent of all districts of 1000 or greater enrollment report the assistance received as "fair" or "poor". High school districts, unit districts, and larger school districts tend strongly to rate the assistance received from the judicial process in responding to truancy as less than satisfactory.

10. The policy concerning school attendance which was most favored by the respondents was a permissive one which would permit the schools to make regulations requiring a parent or guardian of a student to notify the school by telephone any day the student will be absent. More than 72 percent of the high school district respondents favored this policy.

11. School personnel tend to consider regular attendance of a child at school to be a parental responsibility. Thus, they tend to favor stricter procedures for holding the parent responsible.

12. Rather than more legislation concerning school attendance, many respondents expressed the desire to see assistance in the form of stronger enforcement of the existing statutes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The writers of this report recommend that:

1. The findings and conclusions in this report be reviewed carefully in the context in which they are presented -- a descriptive summary of the survey findings.

2. When resources are available, additional secondary analyses which investigate the interrelationship of district size, type, and community type to practices utilized to respond to truant behavior, and to the estimated number of truants be designed.

3. Programs and policies at the state level concerning truancy be structured to respond to local district characteristics such as community type, enrollment, district type, and such other characteristics as may be found by subsequent study to be relevant factors in the problem area.

4. In addition, continued research and analyses of annually collected data at the state level relating to absenteeism and truancy be encouraged, and that the dissemination of the findings of these analyses be systematically conducted.

APPENDICES

SCHOOL PROBLEMS COMMISSION State Office Building Springfield, Illinois 62706	THIS SURVEY IS BEING CONDUCTED BY The Illinois Joint Committee on Truancy and Student Discipline
TRUANCY AND STUDENT ATTENDANCE SURVEY FOLLOW UP	Please return: NOT LATER THAN FEBRUARY 14, 1977
	PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY This questionnaire is intended to identify current attendance policies and practices in Illinois school districts. It will provide background information that can be useful in the development of proposed legislative and administrative changes which would assist schools with attendance/truancy problems.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

1. Does the school district have a written attendance policy?

_____ Don't know
(11) _____ NO
_____ YES

A) If YES above, is the school district's written attendance policy distributed:

_____ Don't know
(12) _____ NO
_____ YES

B) If YES above, to whom is the district's written attendance policy distributed? (Check all which apply.)

(13-14) _____Teachers _____ Parents
(15-16) _____Students _____ Community

2. Are there written procedures for implementing the district's attendance policy?

_____ Don't know
(17) _____ NO
_____ YES (If YES, please return a copy of the procedures with this questionnaire.)

A) If YES above, are the district's written procedures distributed?

_____ Don't know
(18) _____ NO
_____ YES

B) If YES above, to whom are the district's written procedures distributed?

(19-20) _____ Teachers _____ Parents
(21-22) _____ Students _____ Community

TRUANCY

3. Do one or more communities within the school district have a municipal policy or ordinance concerning truancy?

(23) _____ YES
_____ NO
_____ Don't know

4. What are the minimum criteria used to identify a student as a truant in the day-to-day operation of the district's schools? (Please explain below.)

(24)

5. If a student is classified as a "chronic truant," what are the minimum criteria used in the day-to-day operation of the schools to make this determination? (Please explain below.)

(25)

6. Using the criteria described in the response(s) to question(s) 4 and/or 5, what is the best estimate of the number of students in the school district classified as:

	(Report number by grade level)				
	K-6	7-8	9-12 under 16	9-12 16 or over	
... "truants" during the *					
a) current school year to date	_____	_____	_____	_____	(26-41/4)
b) 1975-76 school year	_____	_____	_____	_____	(42-57/4)
c) 1974-75 school year	_____	_____	_____	_____	(58-73/4)
... "chronic truants" during the					
d) current school year to date	_____	_____	_____	_____	(12-27/4)
e) 1975-76 school year	_____	_____	_____	_____	(28-43/4)
f) 1974-75 school year	_____	_____	_____	_____	(44-59/4)

* The estimated numbers of "truants" should include all students so identified, including those classified as "chronic truants," if any (i.e., the count of "chronic truants" will be duplicated in the count of "truants").

TRUANCY

3. Do one or more communities within the school district have a municipal policy or ordinance concerning truancy?

(23) _____ YES
_____ NO
_____ Don't know

4. What are the minimum criteria used to identify a student as a truant in the day-to-day operation of the district's schools? (Please explain below.)

(24)

5. If a student is classified as a "chronic truant," what are the minimum criteria used in the day-to-day operation of the schools to make this determination? (Please explain below.)

(25)

6. Using the criteria described in the response(s) to question(s) 4 and/or 5, what is the best estimate of the number of students in the school district classified as:

	(Report number by grade level)				
	K-6	7-8	9-12		
			under 16	16 or over	
... "truants" during the *					
a) current school year to date	_____	_____	_____	_____	(26-41/4)
b) 1975-76 school year	_____	_____	_____	_____	(42-57/4)
c) 1974-75 school year	_____	_____	_____	_____	(58-73/4)
... "chronic truants" during the					
d) current school year to date	_____	_____	_____	_____	(12-27/4)
e) 1975-76 school year	_____	_____	_____	_____	(28-43/4)
f) 1974-75 school year	_____	_____	_____	_____	(44-59/4)

* The estimated numbers of "truants" should include all students so identified, including those classified as "chronic truants," if any (i.e., the count of "chronic truants" will be duplicated in the count of "truants").

TRUANCY

3. Do one or more communities within the school district have a municipal policy or ordinance concerning truancy?

(23) _____ YES
_____ NO
_____ Don't know

4. What are the minimum criteria used to identify a student as a truant in the day-to-day operation of the district's schools? (Please explain below.)

(24)

5. If a student is classified as a "chronic truant," what are the minimum criteria used in the day-to-day operation of the schools to make this determination? (Please explain below.)

(25)

6. Using the criteria described in the response(s) to question(s) 4 and/or 5, what is the <u>best estimate</u> of the number of students in the school district classified as:

(Report number by grade level)

	K-6	7-8	9-12 under 16	9-12 16 or over	
... "truants" during the *					
a) current school year to date	____	____	____	____	(26-41/4)
b) 1975-76 school year	____	____	____	____	(42-57/4)
c) 1974-75 school year	____	____	____	____	(58-73/4)
... "chronic truants" during the					
d) current school year to date	____	____	____	____	(12-27/4)
e) 1975-76 school year	____	____	____	____	(28-43/4)
f) 1974-75 school year	____	____	____	____	(44-59/4)

* The estimated numbers of "truants" should include all students so identified, including those classified as "chronic truants," if any (i.e., the count of "chronic truants" will be duplicated in the count of "truants").

7. Which of the following practices are <u>commonly utilized</u> in the school district in response to truant behavior by students? (Check all which apply.)

(60) ___a) The parent or guardian of a suspected truant is contacted by telephone.
(61) ___b) A truant officer or attendance officer visits the home of a suspected truant.
(62) ___c) The parent or guardian of a suspected truant is notified of the student's absence by mail.
(63) ___d) Truants are suspended.
(64) ___e) Truants are expelled.
(65) ___f) Parent conferences are conducted.
(66) ___g) Truants receive in-school counseling.
(67) ___h) Truants are referred to community service agencies other than law enforcement. (Specify)_____
(68) ___i) Truants receive special testing.
(69) ___j) Truants receive special education services.
(70) ___k) Truants are placed in vocational schools/or vocational programs.
(71) ___l) Truants are placed in work-study programs.
(72) ___m) Truants are given the option of attending schools in other attendance areas within the school district.
(73) ___n) Truants are placed in residential schools.
(74) ___o) Truants are placed in district-operated alternative learning programs.
(75) ___p) Other (Specify)_____
_____
_____

8. Which of the following legal actions have been taken by district or school administrators in response to truant behavior by students? (Check all which apply.)

(76) ___a) Petitions filed against the parent or guardian (Article 26, <u>School Code of Illinois</u>).
(77) ___b) Petitions filed in Juvenile Court.
(78) ___c) Police assistance requested in locating truants.
(79) ___d) Assistance of state's attorney requested in forcing compliance of parents and students with school attendance laws.
(80) ___e) Other (Please specify)_____
_____

9. The assistance the school district is presently receiving from the judicial process in dealing with truancy would be rated by school administrators and attendance officers as: (Check only one.)

(12) ___Poor ___Good
___Fair ___Excellent
___Adequate

STATE POLICY/LEGISLATION

10. Of the items listed below, which, in your opinion, should be included in state policy or legislation concerning school attendance? (Check all which should be included.)

(13) ___a) Pupil absences must be reported by teachers each class period.

(14) ___b) Schools may make regulations requiring a parent or guardian of a student to notify the school by telephone any day the student will be absent.

(15) ___c) When a student is absent, the school must notify the student's parent or guardian by telephone if the absence has not been reported by the parent or guardian.

(16) ___d) Schools shall keep accurate records of all unexcused absences of one-half day or more.

(17) ___e) Schools shall keep available on a quarterly basis (every 9 weeks) a record of the number of students having unexcused absences of one-half day or more and the total number of days of unexcused absences in the quarter.

11. What, in your opinion, are legislative or administrative changes which might assist schools and school district personnel in reducing truant behavior by students? (Please comment in the space below; add additional pages if needed.)

(18)

Thank you for completing this survey form. If you answered YES to question 2, please return a copy of the district's procedures for

(19) implementing the attendance policy. If you would like to receive a copy of the report of this survey, please check here:_____

(20) Return this questionnaire and any accompanying materials to:

School Problems Commission
State Office Building-Room 1116
Springfield, Illinois 62706

STATE POLICY/LEGISLATION

10. Of the items listed below, which, in your opinion, should be included in state policy or legislation concerning school attendance? (Check all which should be included.)

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11. What, in your opinion, are legislative or administrative changes which might assist schools and school district personnel in reducing truant behavior by students? (Please comment in the space below; add additional pages if needed.)

(18)

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(20) Return this questionnaire and any accompanying materials to:

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State Office Building-Room 1116
Springfield, Illinois 62706

JO DAVIESS
STEPHENSON
WINNEBAGO
BOONE
MCHENRY
LAKE
CARROLL
OGLE
DE KALB
KANE
COOK
DU PAGE
WHITESIDE
LEE
2
KENDALL
WILL
HENRY
BUREAU
LA SALLE
GRUNDY
ROCK ISLAND
MERCER
1
KANKAKEE
PUTNAM
KNOX
STARK
MARSHALL
LIVINGSTON
WARREN
PEORIA
WOODFORD
IROQUOIS
HENDER-SON
FULTON
MCLEAN
HANCOCK
MCDONOUGH
3
TAZEWELL
FORD
VERMILION
MASON
CHAMPAIGN
SCHUYLER
LOGAN
DE WITT
ADAMS
MENARD
PIATT
BROWN
CASS
MACON
4
PIKE
MORGAN
SANGAMON
DOUGLAS
EDGAR
SCOTT
MOULTRIE
COLES
CHRISTIAN
SHELBY
GREENE
MACOUPIN
CLARK
CAL-HOUN
CUMBERLAND
MONTGOMERY
FAYETTE
EFFINGHAM
JASPER
JERSEY
MADISON
BOND
CRAWFORD
CLAY
RICHLAND
LAWRENCE
MARION
5
CLINTON
ST CLAIR
WAYNE
WABASH
WASHINGTON
JEFFERSON
EDWARDS
6
MONROE
HAMILTON
WHITE
RANDOLPH
PERRY
FRANKLIN
JACKSON
SALINE
GALLATIN
WILLIAMSON
UNION
JOHNSON
POPE
HARDIN
ALEX-ANDER
PULASKI
MASSAC

APPENDIX C

THE GEOGRAPHIC TYPOLOGY OF ILLINOIS SCHOOL DISTRICTS

J. Dan Hou
Research and Statistics Section
July 13, 1976

School districts were categorized on the basis of the percentage of the school district population residing in "urban" areas as defined by the U. S. Bureau of the Census. According to the U. S. Bureau of the Census, "urban" areas include (a) places of 2, 500 inhabitants or more incorporated as cities, villages, boroughs, and towns, but exclude the rural portions of extended cities; (b) unincorporated places of 2, 500 inhabitants or more; and (c) other territory, incorporated or unincorporated, included in urbanized areas.[1] As a result, all of Illinois school districts were classified into the following four categories: Central City, Suburban Area, Independent City, and Rural Area.

A central city school district is a district serving the largest city in the standard metropolitan statistical area (SMSA). An SMSA was defined in the same way as in the 1970 Census by the U. S. Bureau of the Census. According to the 1970 Census, an SMSA is an area covering a county or group of contiguous counties which contain at least one city of 50, 000 inhabitants or more, or "twin cities" with a combined population of at least 50, 000. In addition to the county, or counties, containing such a city or cities, contiguous counties are included in an SMSA, if they are socially and economically

[1] U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population: General Social and Economic Characteristics, Final Report, PC(1)-C15, Illinois, (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), App. 1-2.

integrated with the central city.[2] Illinois has nine SMSA's in the 1970 Census.

School districts with less than 50 percent of population living in urbanized areas were classified as rural area districts, regardless of whether they are in SMSA's or non-SMSA's. On the other hand, school districts except those in central cities were classified as urban area school districts, if over 50 percent of their population were found residing in the "urban" areas. Urban area school districts were further categorized as suburban area districts, if they are in the SMSA's. If the urban school districts are not in the SMSA's, they were considered as independent city districts.

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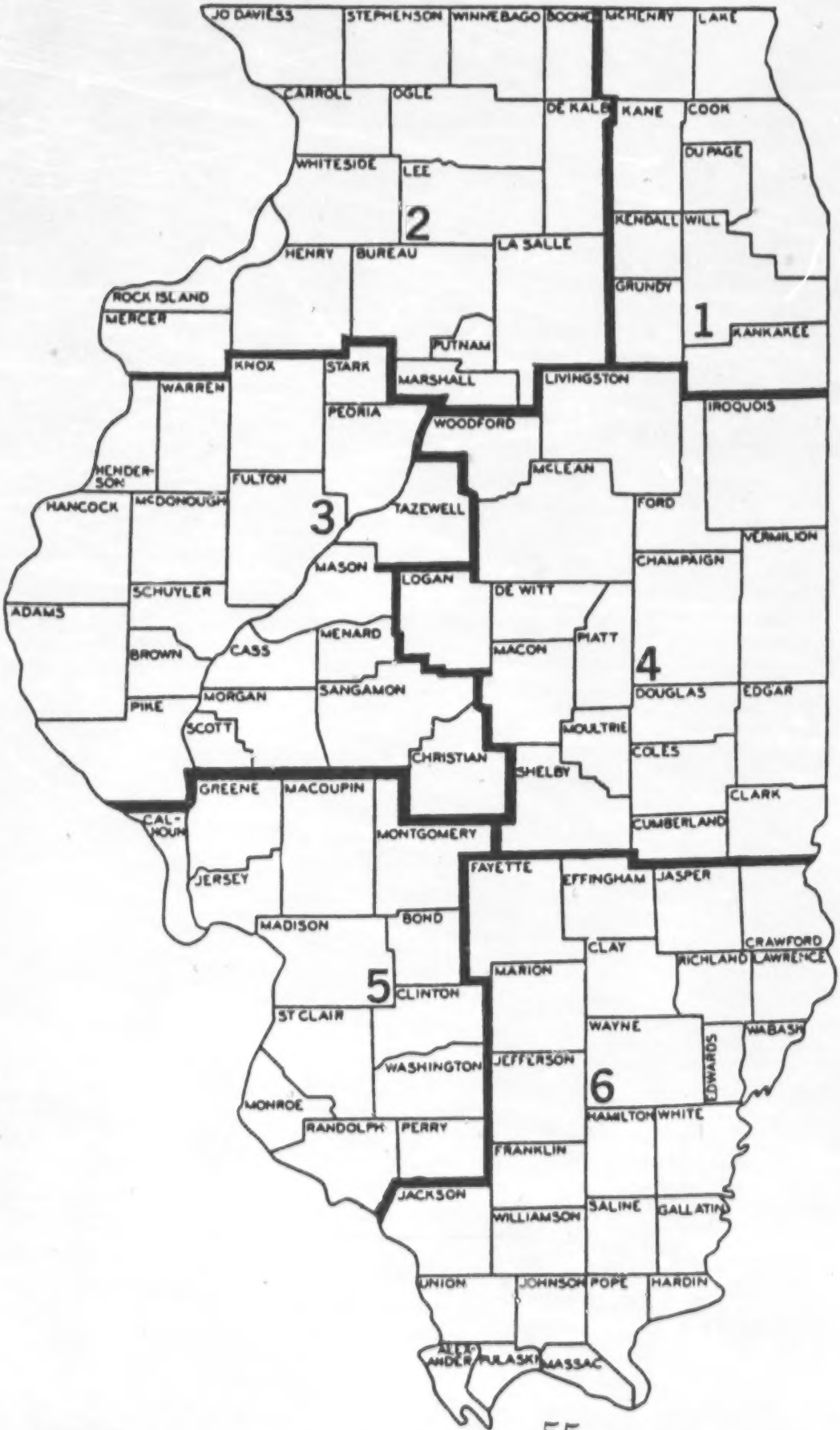
[2]Ibid., App. 4.

APPENDIX D

TABLE 27. PERCENT OF RESPONDENT DISTRICTS BY ENROLLMENT AND COMMUNITY TYPE (N=806)

	Community Type			
Enrollment	Rural	Suburb	Indep. City	Central City
1-299	18.6	0.2	0.0	0.0
300-499	12.2	1.6	0.5	0.0
500-999	16.4	4.5	2.1	0.0
1000-1499	4.6	4.3	4.0	0.0
1500-2999	4.0	8.9	4.0	0.0
3000-5999	0.5	6.2	1.2	0.0
6000-11999	0.0	3.7	0.5	0.4
Over 11999	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.7


JO DAVIESS
STEPHENSON
WINNEBAGO
BOONE
MCHENRY
LAKE
CARROLL
OGLE
DE KALB
KANE
COOK
WHITESIDE
LEE
DU PAGE
2
KENDALL
WILL
HENRY
BUREAU
LA SALLE
GRUNDY
ROCK ISLAND
MERCER
1
KANKAKEE
PUTNAM
KNOX
STARK
MARSHALL
LIVINGSTON
WARREN
PEORIA
WOODFORD
IROQUOIS
HENDER-SON
FULTON
McLEAN
HANCOCK
McDONOUGH
3
TAZEWELL
FORD
VERMILION
MASON
CHAMPAIGN
SCHUYLER
LOGAN
DE WITT
ADAMS
MENARD
PIATT
BROWN
CASS
MACON
4
SANGAMON
DOUGLAS
EDGAR
PIKE
MORGAN
MOULTRIE
SCOTT
CHRISTIAN
SHELBY
COLES
GREENE
MACOUPIN
CLARK
CAL-HOUN
MONTGOMERY
CUMBERLAND
FAYETTE
EFFINGHAM
JASPER
JERSEY
MADISON
BOND
CRAWFORD
CLAY
RICHLAND
LAWRENCE
MARION
5
CLINTON
ST CLAIR
WAYNE
WABASH
EDWARDS
WASHINGTON
JEFFERSON
6
MONROE
HAMILTON
WHITE
RANDOLPH
PERRY
FRANKLIN
JACKSON
SALINE
GALLATIN
WILLIAMSON
UNION
JOHNSON
POPE
HARDIN
ALEX-ANDER
PULASKI
MASSAC